

STATEMENT OF PAUL HOFFMAN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, FISH AND WILDLIFE AND PARKS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS, RECREATION AND PUBLIC LANDS, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES, CONCERNING H.R. 4481, A BILL TO AMEND PUBLIC LAW 86-434 ESTABLISHING WILSON'S CREEK NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD IN THE STATE OF MISSOURI TO EXPAND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PARK, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

JUNE 15, 2004

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify on H.R. 4481, a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior to modify the boundaries of Wilson's Creek National Battlefield in the State of Missouri. The Administration strongly supports enactment of H.R. 4481 and just transmitted a similar proposal to Congress on June 10.

Wilson's Creek National Battlefield lies 10 miles to the southwest of Springfield, Missouri, in one of the fastest growing areas of the country. The current acreage of the park is approximately 1,750 acres, but only 75 percent of the actual combat areas associated with the battle are within the park's boundaries. H.R. 4481 would provide permanent protection from development for significant resources that are integral to the historic events that the park was established to commemorate. It would add approximately 615 acres from six parcels of land that make up the remaining significant resources outside the park boundary that are directly related to the battle. This expansion was included as part of the General Management Plan, and is the number one acquisition priority for the National Park Service's Midwest Region. The operational cost of the Sweeney collection and land structures is estimated at \$0.5 million.

In addition, the Act that established the park in 1960 stated "...the Secretary of the Interior shall acquire...the lands (together with any improvements thereon) comprising the Wilson's Creek Battlefield site near Springfield, Missouri, and any other lands adjacent to such site which in his opinion are necessary or desirable to carry out the purposes of this Act." These parcels would significantly increase the park's capability to interpret the important events surrounding the battle of August 10, 1861, in which over 537 Union and Confederate soldiers lost their lives and 2,500 were wounded.

There are six areas proposed for inclusion within the park's boundaries. Area 1 encompasses 20 acres including General Sweeney's Museum of Civil War History, a garage, and a house. The Sweeney museum is a private museum that houses one of the best privately owned Civil War collections in the United States. The collection includes 8,000 – 10,000 museum objects and numerous archives related to the Battle of Wilson's Creek and the Civil War in the Trans-Mississippi West. Acquisition of the entire Sweeney Archives & Collections is essential to enhance the interpretation and visitor experience of the park. It is anticipated that school groups, researchers, and traditional visitors will use the museum.

Area 2 includes 160 acres encompassing the hilltop where Colonel Franz Sigel began his bombardment of the Confederate encampment and his forces' route of approach to the Sharp stubble field. It also includes a portion of the historic Dixon farmstead that was used as a field hospital. The inclusion of the site would enhance interpretation of the impact of the battle on civilians who lived in the valley.

Area 3 includes 150 acres encompassing the ridge that became known in the aftermath of the battle as Bloody Hill. Bloody Hill was the core combat area of the Battle of Wilson's Creek. It was an area of intense fighting involving thousands of troops. Casualty rates, particularly among Union forces, proportionately were among the highest seen during the entire war.

Area 4 includes 200 acres encompassing the Guinn Farm, Moody's Spring, and the intersection of Telegraph and York Roads. The Guinn Farm was the site of a skirmish between a portion of Sigel's retreating forces and troops of the Missouri State Guard; a Union artillery piece was abandoned here. Moody's Spring provided a year-round water source for both Union and Confederate encampments during the Civil War. The Telegraph Road was critical as a means of linking transportation and communication with southwestern Missouri and St. Louis to the north and Arkansas and Fort Smith to the south. Colonel Sigel's troops also used both the Telegraph Road and the Little York Road during their retreat from the battle.

Area 5 includes 25 acres encompassing the approach of the Union forces under General Nathaniel Lyon. The first shots of the battle were fired here when Lyon's advance troops clashed with southern foragers. The anticipated construction of a trail in this area would allow visitors to retrace General Lyon's route to encounter the battlefield as the main Union force did on the morning of August 10, 1861.

Finally, Area 6 encompasses 60 acres including the rallying point for Louisiana and Arkansas forces that had retreated from the Ray cornfield after nearly overwhelming advancing Union infantry in the opening stages of the battle.

Inclusion of these six areas would allow the National Park Service to more completely tell the story of the Civil War battle at Wilson's Creek while protecting the lands that played a prominent role in this encounter.

An appraisal of the properties has not yet been done, however, the total land acquisition cost for the six areas is estimated at \$6.15 - \$7.38 million, which includes the estimated \$2.5 - \$3.0 million to acquire the museum collection. Area 1, the Sweeney property, is a high priority in the National Park Service's Midwest Regional Office's land acquisition ranking system. The National Park Service would first pursue alternatives that would avoid acquiring fee simple lands (i.e. cooperative agreements, scenic easements) on all but the Sweeney property. The National Park Service would only consider acquisition of a fee simple real property interest if a willing seller were available.

We suggest one technical amendment to the bill. Since the bill is drafted as an amendment to P.L. 86-434, which does not include headings for any of the sections of the law, we recommend that the proposed headings in H.R. 4481 for Section (1) and subsections (a) and (b) be omitted to insure consistency in the law.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to comment. This concludes my prepared remarks and I will be happy to answer any questions you or other committee members might have.